

Good morning, Inspector and to all those Present.

I am Cllr Andy Moore, and I appear here today as an objector to this planning appeal. I am speaking on behalf of Newbury Town Council and its Planning & Highways Committee; we are concerned about the serious and irreversible consequences that approval of this appeal would have on our community and environment.

To be clear from the outset: we are not opposed to the principle of developing the Kennet Centre. Newbury Town Council fully acknowledges the need for thoughtful and sustainable development, and we understand the importance of making good use of available land within the town. However, we strongly believe that any development must be appropriate to its setting — and, unfortunately, the current proposal falls short of that requirement.

We respectfully submit that the decision of West Berkshire Council to refuse the original application was both sound and well-founded, based on clear conflicts with national and local planning policies.

Our objections are on four key planning grounds:

- **Heritage Assets and Design** - The plan put forward by the appellant is, in our view, out of scale and character with the surrounding conservation area. It fails to respect the unique historic and architectural context of our town centre and risks overwhelming nearby landmarks that are of significant local and cultural importance. Rather than enhancing the town, this proposal would dominate it — to the detriment of the very qualities that make this place special. This is our major concern.
- **Parking** - we have concerns regarding the adequacy of parking provision associated with this proposal. The development fails to provide additional parking provision; instead, it re-assigns the

Kennet Centre multi-storey car park, for shared use by both residents of the proposed accommodation and town centre visitors. Yet no clear strategy has been presented to manage potential conflicts between these groups or to prevent overspill to nearby roads, where space is already at a premium.

- **Amenity Space** – The proposed development provides insufficient private or communal amenity space for future residents, particularly when considered against the overall number and density of residential units. The lack of high-quality, usable space within the scheme raises serious concerns about the long-term liveability and wellbeing of occupants, especially families, children, and vulnerable people. The residential units themselves appear to be on the smaller side, which further heightens the importance of access to high-quality external space.

We, the Town Council, are responsible for maintaining the majority of parks and open spaces within the town and near to the Kennet Centre. With local authority devolution in discussion, we believe it possible that our responsibilities will increase. We are concerned about the additional pressure this development would place on nearby public open spaces — most notably Victoria Park and its associated play areas. While the appellant has referenced Victoria Park as an amenity for future residents, the suggestions in the recently available CIL Compliance statement look somewhat light for capital input and we would be looking for ongoing maintenance funding. We should be engaged in this discussion given the anticipated increased use of our facilities.

Without adequate internal or external provision, the quality of life and mental wellbeing of future residents is likely to be compromised.

- **Planning Balance** – While the proposed re-development may deliver some benefits — including additional housing, commercial units (although there must be a question about whether we need those), and investment — these must be carefully balanced against the significant and lasting harm identified. The scheme's excessive scale, lack of integration with its historic context, unresolved parking concerns, inadequate amenity provision, and potential impact on local infrastructure all point to a development that is poorly aligned with both local needs and policy expectations. Importantly, the proposal is inconsistent with the strategic vision and policy direction set out in several key documents to which we refer.

Throughout this inquiry, we will seek to demonstrate that the harm caused by this proposal significantly outweighs any claimed benefits and that the appeal should be dismissed.

This is not about resisting change. It is about insisting that development is done in a thoughtful and considerate manner. The town centre deserves a scheme that enhances the public realm, supports a vibrant local economy, and responds sensitively to its unique historic context — not one that overwhelms it.

We ask the Inspector to recognise that better alternatives are both possible and necessary. A more appropriate scheme, grounded in good design and local character, would receive broad support and offer genuine long-term value to the community. We thank the Inspector for the opportunity to present our views.

Thank you.

